

Hi Everyone,

We are please to share the newest Alaska nutrition theme poster--Fruits and Vegetables So Good For Me Poster. LAs will soon receive copies and we're sending enough copies to share with our village clinic partners. This is the most intricate poster that Evon Zerbetz has done for WIC, and she managed to incorporate farming, gathering, berry picking, and farmer's market, as well as fresh, frozen and canned vegetables. For more copies, you can contact Amy George at 465-3100. UAA has already developed content information for the accompanying nutrition education inserts and we have purchased fruit/vegetable bags that will be delivered to clinics in the coming months.

The WIC State Office will be closed on Monday, January 21, in observation of Martin Luther King Day.

Have a great weekend,

Kathleen

1. Black and White AK Theme Coloring Sheets—we are updating the AK WIC website with these resources, which can be used as coloring sheets.
2. MOV ALERT---Starting today, January 18, MOV "999" food packages will no longer be honored through Fred Meyer and AIRSA will not be able to start taking "999" MOV orders until their contract starts February 1st. The vendor group is working hard to amend AIRSA's MOV contract to accommodate these rarely prescribed food packages. Prescribing a "999" MOV package should be the exception to normal WIC business. This temporary change to the MOV process should not present any client hardship since there are no "999" MOV packages currently prescribed. Please contact Dana Kent at 465-5322 or Jennifer Johnson at 465-8104 if you have questions about this.

Nice To Know

Breastfeeding Stamp Petition

A White House [petition has been launched](#) urging the Obama Administration to develop and issue a stamp or series of stamps that depict, promote, and normalize breastfeeding. If a petition gets enough support, White House

staff must review it, ensure it's sent to the appropriate policy experts, and issue an official response. The threshold for this response is 25,000 signatures by February 10, so please share the petition link widely!

[Sally E. Findley, Ph.D. and Linda P. Fried, M.D., MPH](#)

Is the Tide Turning on Child Obesity?

Posted: 01/11/2013 5:00 pm

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In these early weeks of the new year, a flurry of resolutions can be heard across the land to eat healthier, work out more, and win the battle of the bulge.

In years past, it was a losing battle for most of us. So say the rising levels of overweight, obesity and morbid obesity we've seen since the 1970s. The worst of it has been watching obesity soar among our children -- [tripling](#) from 5 percent of children ages 2 to 19 in 1980 to 17 percent by 2010. Among the country's poorest children, the prevalence is [more than 20 percent](#). Once a child toddles down the road to obesity, it is very difficult to turn back. It's a future of futile new year's resolutions for most.

But this season, there's reason to be hopeful. A [series of new studies](#) show that child obesity in the U.S. is beginning to drop among the very young -- a critical age when obesity gets its insidious start. A report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, published in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* in late December, brought the good news that among low-income children ages 2 to 4, [obesity fell](#) from a high of 15.2 percent in 2003 to 14.9 percent in 2010. The study was based on information from the 27 million toddlers enrolled in the federal Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, or WIC.

Good news has also come from several cities around the country including Philadelphia, Los Angeles, New York and Anchorage -- cities that have anti-obesity policies in their schools and communities. In each of these diverse cities, child obesity has begun to fall: 5 percent in [Philadelphia and New York](#), approximately 3 percent in [Los Angeles](#), for example.

Add to that results from a study led by researchers at our school showing that in New York State, the [proportion of preschoolers who are obese](#) or overweight has fallen. New York State was the [first in the nation](#) to implement changes to the WIC program that included a healthier mix of foods and a lifestyle education program that emphasizes less time watching cartoons on the sofa and more time running, climbing and jumping. [Emerging evidence suggests](#) that these changes

each year help an additional 3,000 New York infants and toddlers stay at healthy weights, approximately. [According to our research](#), extending these results to the entire nation could mean 36,000 fewer overweight or obese infants and toddlers per year.

It's early to say precisely what factors are bringing about the long-sought downturn in early childhood obesity, but we have some important clues. [Surveys by the CDC](#) indicate that public health campaigns, including those at WIC, that stress the value of breastfeeding are succeeding: The share of low-income U.S. mothers who breastfeed their infants leapt from 28 percent in 1980 to 66 percent in 2011. Breastfed babies are [less likely to be overweight](#). Exercise and dietary changes promoted by WIC and Head Start are also likely to help preschoolers stay at a normal weight. And there is an increased emphasis on physical activity -- including the first lady's Let's Move program, which reaches daycare programs, schools and community groups all over the country.

As we've seen in our own study, federal policy changes can have an impact. About half of all infants born in the U.S. [receive milk and food through the WIC program](#). Changing diet and behavior through that program appears to be helping to prevent obesity. The time is right -- and the technology exists -- for making similar changes in the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (popularly known as food stamps) to nudge families toward healthier choices. One of the most effective changes that could be made at virtually no cost to taxpayers would be to disallow the purchase of sugar-sweetened carbonated beverages, just as tobacco and alcohol are already off-limits due to their unhealthy consequences.

Now that evidence is accumulating that child obesity is not a lost cause, we should seize the day. The current fervor to cut programs like WIC and SNAP is pennywise and pound-foolish. And we mean many pounds. These programs are poverty programs, to be sure, but they are also health programs that can provide a shrewd investment in preventing children from starting down that painful, disease-ridden and costly road to obesity. And while we are at it, let's keep investing in research that enables us to drill down into the data on declining child obesity and find the truth about what works best. This could help us accelerate the trend.

The best resolution we can make at this time of year is not merely for our own personal fitness but for a fitter society, beginning with our kids. And it's starting to look like a resolution we can keep.

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